BRIDGEWATER STATE UNIVERSITY

Journal of International Women's Studies

Volume 13
Issue 6 *New Writings in Feminist and Women's Studies: Winning and Short-listed Entries from the 2011 Feminist and Women's Studies Association UK & Ireland (FWSA) Annual Student Essay Competition*

Article 3

Dec-2012

Understanding Antiwar Activism as a Gendering Activity: A Look at the U.S.'s Anti-Vietnam War Movement

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Abstract

Research into the gendered nature of war experiences has provided rich ways of understanding how gender constructs society and the nation. Scholarship on peace activism and gender has deepened our knowledge of women's roles within warring societies and the ways women have understood themselves as promoters of peace. While much of this research asks how antiwar activities and war are predicated upon dominant gender ideals and focuses in particular on women's experiences, this article aims to explore how some wartime events, specifically antiwar activism, constitutes or reconstitutes gender. Focusing on the United States' anti-Vietnam War history, I examine how activists cemented, challenged and made anew notions of femininity and masculinity within and through this antiwar arena. I argue that both women and men activists created opportunities within the anti-Vietnam War movement to reconceptualise links between war and gender. Though feminist scholars have elucidated the splits that occurred amongst these women activists, this article seeks to situate these divisions within contested understandings of femininity, as well as to extend scholarly exploration into competing notions of antiwar masculinities.

Keywords: anti-Vietnam War movement, masculinity, femininity

Introduction

That war constitutes a gendered and gendering experience is a theme that scholars from a range of disciplines have developed. It is taken for granted that war generally provides a dichotomous experience in relation to gender: men fight the wars, while women remain 'at home' to be 'protected' by the men. A variation on this basic notion that has garnered extensive research holds that while men make war women make peace (Yuval-Davis, 1997; York, 2004). Scholars Conover and Sapiro (1993) have shown that many female populations support war less than their male counterparts, and these scholars engage in the robust debate that attempts to explain this dynamic. Two key strands in this debate regard, in the first place, the degree to which women's essential or constructed femininity affect their collective propensity towards peace and, in the second instance, the place of motherhood in women's notions of peace (York, 2004; Conover and Sapiro, 1993).

Indeed, much of the scholarship on the intersection of gender, war and investigates how women have conceptualised their place as women or mothers in peace-making efforts. As a former activist in the organisation Women Strike for Peace, about which she has written extensively, Swerdlow (1993) has historicised this women's antiwar organisation of the 1960s United States. She argues that the women active in this organisation 'built on the postwar cultural construction of motherhood to organize a militant female opposition to the draft for Vietnam' (1992, p. 159). Ruddick's work (1989), which draws connections between 'maternal thinking' and peace, has drawn much attention. Historians (Gilbert, 1983; Cock, 1991) looking into questions of gender and peace find much from which to draw theories of women's pacifism in works like South African

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author Olive Schreiner's 1911 writing, *Women and Labour*, wherein Schreiner explains that, as mothers or potential mothers, women are essentially peaceful and abhor war: '[O]n this point, and on this point almost alone, the knowledge of woman, simply as woman, is superior to that of man; she knows the history of human flesh; she knows its cost; he does not' (p. 173).

In this essay, I offer a different way of thinking through antiwar activism and gender. I am interested in uncovering ways in which war experiences shift through changing gendered relations. I follow Scott's counsel to ask questions that divulge more than 'the impact of events on women' in wartime by interrogating 'the process of politics...and the meanings of social experiences' that arise through men's and women's wartime experiences (Scott 1987, p. 25). Here, however, I aim to apply these questions specifically to the antiwar arena, and I seek to open up this investigation to men and masculinities. In other words, I ask how antiwar activism constitutes a gendering activity, how femininities and masculinities are variously contested and re-shaped through this activism. I investigate activism connected to the United States' war in Vietnam during the 1960s and 70s. In part because reaction against this war was so great and varied and in larger part because I am consciously moving away from a motherist framework, which has already garnered ample attention, I focus on the mainstream movement, those actions perpetuated by a largely youthful, white, and highly educated group of people in the U.S.[2] My central questions are: In what ways is war protest a *gendering* experience? How does antiwar activism shape ideas about gender, instead of the other way around? In posing these questions, I strive to understand how this movement against the Vietnam War at turns upheld traditional gender notions, propelled critiques of them, channelled gender unease, and worked to revise gender roles. While the mutually constitutive nature of gender and the nation has long been upheld (Yuval-Davis 1997; Mayer, 2000), in the context of antiwar activism this relationship has received little attention, and unfortunately this essay does not contain enough space to provide a thorough examination of such dynamics. However, I also try to raise some questions regarding the ways in which the relationship between gender and the nation were contested through antiwar activism.

In broaching my key questions, I discuss shifting gendered relations within the anti-Vietnam War movement and then look at two specific moments of the movement in order to flesh out the ways in which activists attempted to challenge dominant notions of femininity and masculinity. The two particular events I examine – the 'Burial of Traditional Womanhood' in January of 1968 and the October 1967 Pentagon protest – have received a great deal of scholarly attention, particularly from historians of the movement. However, the meaning of them as gendering enterprises, as attempts at remaking dominant notions of gender, within an antiwar context has largely been overlooked. My analysis here relies on a mix of primary sources – documents written by antiwar activists or observers of the movement – and secondary research from historians, sociologists and gender scholars. The primary sources relay first-hand accounts of the two particular events that I consider here or are documents that were central to these events (i.e. the document was itself part of the event), and I work to contextualise these within the accounts below.

[2] Beyond this statement, I refrain from characterising the racial and class positionalities of the activists I discuss in this essay. I do so not because I wish to divert attention away from an intersectional framework that understands that activists' experiences were shaped by identities and factors other than their activism. Rather, this avoidance is due to the fact that many of the sources I draw on here, with the exception of Gerzon, do not etch racial and class identities within their observations.

Women against the war: reacting to sexism, rethinking femininity

Most gendered examinations of Vietnam War protest have examined women's involvement (Evans, 1980; Echols,1992; Swerdlow, 1993; Tischler, 2000). Those scholars pushing beyond a motherist framework often recount the anti-Vietnam War movement's sexism, highlighting the ways in which women responded to it while taking it for granted as a pervasive, culturally-bestowed dynamic for movement men. While such research has explored the multiple and complex ways that women responded to movement sexism and the resulting implications for notions of femininity, the contestations that occurred around these notions that took place within women-dominated anti-war spaces are largely overlooked.

In one quite key way, the anti-Vietnam War movement worked to cement traditional gender roles – through the explicit invocation of male superiority in antiwar activity. Male chauvinism was a widely reported problem within the movement, as men moved to assert their authority over an issue that they felt greatly affected them. Jeffreys-Jones observes that male activists, 'defended their dominance, especially in the anti-draft movement, by stating that it was their lives that were at risk and therefore their prerogative to dictate tactics' (1999, p. 153). He argues that this thinking often led men to delegate tasks and roles to women that were bereft of decision-making and characterized by underappreciated work, such as typing and preparing food. Previous New Left efforts often presaged this dynamic. For example in Students for a Democratic Society, the crucial everyday contributions of women often stood in the shadows of the much-aggrandised work that men carried out (Evans, 1980). Clearly, this division of labour closely mirrored that of the larger U.S. society, and it ensured an overall subordinate status for women activists.

Women responded to this dynamic in a multitude of ways. Some women turned the logic on its head and argued that women were better, more righteous antiwar protestors than men because they were not motivated by the threat of being drafted. As a former activist within the antiwar chapter of SDS, Margery Tabankin recalled, 'Part of being a woman was this psychology of proving I was such a good radical, "better than then men." We [women] felt we were motivated by something higher because we didn't have to go to war ourselves' (quoted in MacPherson 1984, p. 467). Tischler has pointed out the way in which this line of thought – suggestive as it is of the construction of the virtuous and selfless woman – indicates the difficulty women (particularly white middle-class women) activists faced as they 'tried to develop an independent position within the antiwar movement' (Tischler 2000, n.p.). That is, Tabankin and other like-minded women activists relied on the normative idea of women as pure and selfless in their attempts to re-create a credible female identity. However difficult it was for many women to break from normative ideas of femininity, they nonetheless rejected the marginalisation of women's antiwar work by re-working the logic of male superiority in the movement, and they re-conceptualised women activists' role in a way that made it important and valuable.

Some women agreed with the male imperative that positioned 'women's issues' as peripheral to the 'real work' of antiwar activism (Tischler 2000, n.p.). These women became known within the movement as 'politicos', and they were often caught between a desire to be taken seriously in the movement (by men) and identifying with feminist issues. Politicos at times disparaged women's issues or went along with the sexually exploitative position in which women were frequently placed in order to engender greater support for the movement (Echols, 1989; Tischler, 2000). For instance, some women acquiesced with the popular antiwar slogan 'Girls Say Yes to Boys Who Say No', like singer Joan Baez who posed for a poster with that caption (Jeffreys-Jones 1999, p. 154). Politicos were also ideologically motivated. In line with New Left

thinking, many believed capitalism to be the source of women's oppression and saw socialist revolution – like that taking place in Vietnam – as that which would end women's oppression (Echols, 1992).

Still, increasing numbers of young women activists rejected attempts to de-legitimise women's issues, which, as former movement participant Evans (1980) maintains, were inextricably linked to their place within the movement. Antiwar efforts lost many women activists to frustrations over chauvinism within the movement and the persistent dismissal of women's voices (Evans, 1980; Echols, 1989). Evans (1980) has offered the most detailed history of the ways in which anti-Vietnam War activity spurred the creation of the women's liberation movement. In her highly influential account, *Personal Politics* (1980), she maintains that the U.S. women's liberation movement had its roots in other protest movements of the time – including the antiwar movement – which often served to suppress and marginalise women's voices and ideas. Evans argues that the alienation of women in the New Left increased once protest against the war became its central pursuit, and she maintains that this disaffection 'opened up the process of radicalization to thousands [of women] and sharpened the ideology women eventually would use to describe their own oppression' (1980, p. 170).

As a case in point, the New York-based women's liberation group, the Redstockings, got its start after one of its would-be founders, Shulamith Firestone, and another antiwar activist, Marilyn Webb, attempted to speak at the January 1969 Counter-Inaugural Protest, which was sponsored by a major national antiwar organisation – the National Mobilization to End the War in Vietnam (known as Mobe). Many men sexually harassed the women as they spoke, yelling comments like 'Take her off the stage and fuck her!' (Echols 1992, p. 179). Not long after this demonstration, Firestone co-founded the Redstockings, and she wrote a letter to Mobe's paper in which she assailed the New Left:

> We say to the left: in this past decade you have failed to live up to your rhetoric of revolution. You have not reached the people…There are millions of women out there desperate enough to rise. Women's liberation is dynamite. And we have more important things to do than to try to get you to come around….Fuck off, left….We're starting our own movement. (quoted in Echols 1992, p. 180)

As Firestone reveals, women's liberationists split not only with male antiwar activists and their frequent insistence on putting men at the centre of antiwar activity; they also parted ways with women politicos. Indeed, Firestone's ire at the 'left' (not just men) shows the depth of the fissure that had formed between politico and feminist women in the antiwar movement.

As women in the anti-Vietnam War movement contemplated the intersections of gender, peace and war, for many, questions around how women should approach peace activism *as women* surfaced as much in spaces dominated by (or created for) women as it did in reaction to movement sexism. The latter tended to generate debates that centred on gender relations and power within movement activity. The former, however, gave rise to contestations over the very meaning of femininity, in the context of war specifically but also its larger social significance. Oftentimes these disputes arose along generational lines, and at times, antiwar actions became the sites at which normative notions of femininity, particularly essentialised pacific femininity, were cemented, contested and/or made anew. Such was the case with the Jeannette Rankin Brigade, a coalitional action coordinated by a number of liberal women's peace groups on 15 January 1968 that petitioned Congress to immediately withdraw U.S. troops from Vietnam. Named for the

U.S.'s first Congresswoman, who had in fact voted against U.S. entry in both world wars, the Brigade included a convention and a march in Washington, D.C., attended by several thousand women (Echols, 1989; Armstrong and Prashad, 2005). A contingent of young, radical feminists took part in the events, and they aimed to both oppose the war and to trouble the gendered notions that undergirded the antiwar sentiments of the liberal women's groups.

Though not all, a number of this younger delegation were part of the New York Radical Women (NYRW), one of that city's first women's liberation groups. It had formed only a few months prior to the Brigade, yet NYRW immediately set its sights on this action (Echols, 1989). NYRW opposed the Brigade on tactical grounds; it was 'futile' and 'naïve' to appeal to a political system that did not recognise women (Firestone 1968a, n.p.). Even more problematic to NYRW, though, was that the Brigade perpetuated an essentialist understanding of women as selfless and peace-loving and used this understanding to inform their antiwar stance. In a report following the Brigade, Shulamith Firestone, who co-founded NYRW before she moved on to the Redstockings, wrote:

> [T]he Brigade was playing upon the traditional female role in the classic manner. They came as wives, mothers and mourners; that is, tearful and passive reactors to the actions of men rather than organizing as women to change that definition of femininity to something other than a synonym for weakness, political impotence, and tears. (Firestone 1968a, n.p.)

To Firestone and her comrades, the Brigade reinforced normative definitions of wartime femininity. The organisers emphasised their relationships to men involved in the war – 'wives, mothers and mourners' – as they made emotive ('tearful') attempts to urge peace. Their very supplications underscored the 'weakness' of 'the traditional female role' during times of war, as it presumed the power of men – in particular, the largely male Congress – to make decisions on war and peace.

Frustrated by the Brigade's failure to question or challenge these notions of femininity, NYRW and other feminists attended the Brigade's activities, Firestone wrote, 'to appeal to women not to appeal to congress [*sic*] ' (1968a, n.p.). They presented a speech at the Brigade's convention to this effect, and in a move that surprised even the NYRW feminists who urged it, 500 of the roughly 5000 women at the convention split to organise separately (Firestone, 1968a; Hanish 2001, pp. 78-79). NYRW led a further action that evening. Their alternative march, called 'The Burial of Traditional Womanhood', has become iconic for scholars of the women's liberation movement who have largely analysed it in terms of its significance to political fissures amongst feminists (Echols, 1989; Tischler, 2000). This event, though, a march-cum-street-theatre action, is significant for what it illuminates about gendered contestations amongst women in a U.S. antiwar context.

'The Burial of Traditional Womanhood' took place at night 'by torchlight' and entailed a funeral procession for a 'larger-than-life dummy on a transported bier' whose symbolic embodiment of 'traditional womanhood' included 'feminine getup, blank face, blonde curls' and accoutrements like 'curlers, garters, and hairspray' (Firestone 1968a, n.p.). Feminists from NYRW donned funeral attire and organised a drum corps, while feminists from other groups provided songs written especially for the occasion. NYRW member Kathie Amatniek (1968, n.p.) read out a 'funeral oration' for Traditional Womanhood, and pamphlets were distributed that, like the oration, told of how 'powerless' traditional womanhood had proved in the past.

Burial organisers directed the event at the Brigade participants to whom they issued an invitation that highlighted the role that normative femininity generally played in times of war and compared this with the actions of the Brigade. The invitation informed participants that Traditional Womanhood had '"passed with a sigh to her Great Reward this year of the Lord, 1968, after 3,000 years of bolstering the egos of Warmakers and aiding the cause of war"' (quoted in Firestone 1968a, n.p.). It continued:

> Don't Bring Flowers…Do be prepared to sacrifice your traditional female roles. You have refused to hanky-wave boys off to war with admonitions to save the American Mom and Apple Pie. You have resisted your roles of supportive girl friends [*sic*] and tearful widows, receivers of regretful telegrams and worthless medals of honor. And now you must resist approaching Congress playing these same roles that are synonymous with powerlessness. We must not come as passive suppliants begging for favors, for power cooperates only with power. We must learn to fight the warmongers on their own terms, though they believe us capable only of rolling bandages. Until we have united into a force to be reckoned with, we will be patronized and ridiculed into total political ineffectiveness. So if you are really sincere about ending this war, join us tonight and in the future. (quoted in Firestone 1968a, n.p.)

Perhaps condescendingly, Burial organisers applauded Brigade participants for refusing to participate in normative pro-war feminine capacities. Such 'traditional' functions (the 'hanky-wave' and reception of 'regretful telegrams and 'worthless medals of honor') were infused with nationalist aspirations, and the U.S., in turn, was feminised and required protection. The 'American Mom' and her 'Apple Pie' were waiting at home, patient if tearful, and this after all, 'aid[ed] the cause of war' and 'bolster[ed] the egos of Warmakers'. Yet, Burial organisers told the Brigade, the latter in many ways represented resistance to these jingoist feminine notions. The former recognised that amongst those partaking in the Brigade a certain normative wartime femininity was not being played out, and they shared this with the women of the Brigade. Nonetheless, NYRW and other Burial participants admonished the Brigade for enacting a similarly 'powerless' and 'ineffective' feminine role by appealing to Congress to end the war. This group recognised that the cultural ideas that 'allowed' U.S. women to protest war rendered their protest ineffective because of the equation of passivity with femininity. Thus, 'traditional' femininity infused the Brigade, the organisers of the Burial felt, and rendered it futile. Indeed, it was the very form of femininity enacted by the Brigade that Burial organisers felt ensured the political inefficacy of the action.

During the burial itself, the symbolic interment of this femininity at Arlington Cemetery – the U.S.'s national military cemetery – allowed NYRW members and other feminists to mount their challenge to this normative femininity, delineate its connections to war and peace, and begin to chart an alternative roles and ideals for women. In the dirge she read aloud, Amatniek (1968, n.p.) noted both defining characteristics of 'traditional womanhood', which included a stress on sexuality and reproductive capacities and submissiveness to men, as well as the ways in which these qualities shaped gendered power relations. 'Traditional' femininity revolved around domesticity, for instance, which ensured dependence upon the breadwinning male archetype whose work outside the home allowed him to 'operate as an individual self as well as a husband and father' (Amatniek 1968, n.p.). Amatniek reported that Traditional Womanhood had passed

away and that 'our march today contributed to the lady's timely demise' because of how 'frightening' she found it:

> And it was particularly frightening to her to see other women, we- women, asserting ourselves together, however precariously, in some kind of solidarity, instead of completely resenting each other, being embarrassed by each other, hating each other and hating ourselves […] Yes, sisters, we have a problem as women all right, a problem which renders us powerless and ineffective over the issues of war and peace, as well as over our own lives. (Amatniek 1968, n.p.)

In other words, part of playing the Traditional Woman, part of the power of normative femininity, included internalised misogyny – an inclination away from identifying positively with other women and recognising their value and power. Normative feminine ideals fostered divisions amongst women in ways that diminished their abilities to act collectively and to form bases of power, and this, NYRW and other feminists felt, had negative implications for their antiwar efforts.

Amatniek also hinted at the kinds of pro-war gender relations that Firestone later described. The Brigade had striven to organise women 'on the basis of power…that little bit of power we are told we have here in America…the so-called power of wives and mothers'; however, they failed to recognise that 'this power is only a substitute for power, that it really amounts to nothing politically' (Amatniek 1968, n.p.). And it was precisely this falsehood, this masquerade of feminine power, that necessitated the Burial: 'We must bury her in Arlington Cemetery, however crowded it is by now. For in Arlington Cemetery, our national monument to war, alongside Traditional Manhood, is her natural resting place' (Amatniek 1968, n.p.). Here, Amatniek insinuated the mutually reinforcing relationship between normative masculine and feminine ideals and the centrality of the military and war to both. If normative femininity 'here in America' entailed an ability to enact political power through the invocation of familial relationships to those who served in war and if the specious nature of this power in fact further limited U.S. women's social and political power, 'traditional womanhood', much like her political power, could be counted and laid to rest amongst the war dead.

Men against the war: competing masculinities

Attempts by male activists to maintain a collective position of dominance over their female counterparts belie the gendered anxieties that men brought to the antiwar arena. Within the anti-Vietnam War movement, traditional notions of masculinity were at turns taken for granted, emphasised and challenged. However, far less scholarly attention has been paid to issues of masculinity and protest against the war in Vietnam than has been given to femininity and women's roles in the movement, particularly by historians.[3] This is not to say, however, that some scholars have not understood that the Vietnam War era in general had a great impact on notions of masculinity; the research of Gerzon (1982) and Raphael (1982) provide important and rare interjections in this. In general, however, scholarship has failed to recognise the multiplicity of

[3] Important works on the anti-Vietnam War movement or the New Left and gender almost wholly fail to analyse masculinity. Landmark texts such as Evans' (1980) and Echols' (1989), as well as others (Swerdlow 1992, 1993; Tischler 2000) tend to focus explicitly on women. They examine shifts in femininity or women's roles, take sexism as a given and ignore shifts in sexists practices and masculinities.

ways in which male activists used antiwar activism in general, or the anti-Vietnam War movement in particular, in order to work through masculinity-based anxieties. While young men (re)asserted their masculinity through collective male domination and chauvinism, they also tried to create a masculinity that debunked the centrality of war to traditional conceptions of manhood and the nation.

From the outset, it is important to note the significance of the divide between those who supported and those who opposed the war and how pro-war men used this split to call into question the masculinity of antiwar men. The pro- and antiwar lines across the country were, as Adams (1992, pp. 184-85) points out, 'drawn by the media and emphasized by the politician, [and they] did not soften' as the war decreased in popularity. 'Hawks' (pro-Vietnam War persons) frequently effeminised 'doves' (anti-Vietnam War persons). In reference to a male dove within his administration, for instance, President Lyndon Johnson remarked, 'Hell, he has to squat to piss!' (quoted in Jeffreys-Jones 1999, p. 154). Hawks also accused doves of 'cowardice' when they would not join or support the armed services (Jeffreys-Jones 1999, p. 153). The fear of looking 'soft' on the issue of war was so pervasive and gripped even male hawks. President Johnson himself – in a case in point that is quite illuminating for his above remark – acknowledged how this kind of apprehension motivated his decision to continue the war on Vietnam: '[I]f I left the war and let the Communists take over South Vietnam, than I would be seen as a coward and my nation would be seen as an appeaser' (quoted in Gerzon 1982, p. 93). Johnson's comments also suggest the ways in which notions of masculinity and the nation were bound together. For Johnson and other hawks, perpetuating the war allowed the U.S. to preserve an image infused with normative masculine ideals of strength and aggression. His remark speaks to the relationship between the national image, ego and masculinity that Mayer (2000, p. 6), building off Hroch (1996), delineates: men attempt to 'defend the "ego" of the nation' because 'their identity is so often intertwined with that of the nation that it translates into a "personalized image of the nation"'. That is, Johnson and other hawks projected their own sense of masculinity onto the bellicose image of the U.S., an image which in turn they had to continuously attempt to maintain through prolonged war in Vietnam. That war was integral to hawks' notions of both masculinity and the U.S. as a nation meant that both the masculinity and patriotism of antiwar men could be called into question.

The impact of attempts to emasculate antiwar men was multiplied by the enduring notion that war turned boys into men. In his study of male rites of passage in the U.S., Raphael (1989) identifies participation in war as a particularly important way in which the U.S. has historically imagined initiation into manhood. One man he interviewed, who importantly was not a veteran, remarked, 'I think that there must be some parallel that war is to men what childbirth is to women' (p. 150). Raphael reads the Vietnam War as 'an abortive rite of passage for an entire generation of American males, even for those who stayed behind' (1982, p. 146). Regarding 'those who stayed behind', Raphael refers more generally to men who were never stationed in Vietnam than specifically to male antiwar activists; however, his exploration of the effects of such a widely-held cultural notion of masculinity on all young U.S. men coming of age during the Vietnam War is exceptionally insightful. While he notes the shift provoked by the Vietnam War in the way the larger U.S. society viewed 'the prestige of the warrior', Raphael also examines what became known as 'non-veteran guilt' (p. 146). He argues that this guilt acts as a symptom of a wider crisis of contemporary U.S. masculinity – that young males in the U.S. largely lacked opportunities for emersion into manhood. Men of all stripes, including antiwar doves, experienced non-veteran guilt, which often provoked masculinity-based anxiety. Indeed, many men felt some of this guilt

for legally circumventing the draft. Attending college, registering as a conscientious objector, proving the existence of health-related problems – none of these options came with any particularly masculinising effects, and in fact, as Raphael's (1982) interviewees attest, many of them precipitated guilt. One individual who actually opposed the war and escaped the draft by legitimately failing a health test speaks explicitly to the kinds of masculinity-based anxieties that seemed to coincide with non-veteran guilt, even as a dove: 'Failing an army physical – failing it so *desperately* – was not totally compatible with my feelings of incipient manhood' (quoted in Gerzon 1982, p. 151, original emphasis). Thus, many antiwar men struggled under the weight of normative masculine ideals that bound war experience and manhood.

Still, the Vietnam War era also marked a significant departure in modern notions of masculinity. Raphael (1982) argues that this very idea – regarding the centrality of war participation as a masculinising experience – altered greatly during this era because of technological changes to warfare and the intensifying unpopularity of the Vietnam War, among other factors. This meant that many men were left to discover their own methods for asserting their manhood. He somewhat myopically emphasises 'the acquisition of money' in efforts to create a new rite of male passage (1982, p. 158). Yet, it is here, in light of the supposed need for young men to find a way to prove their masculinity that we may come to better understand the prevalent sexism of the anti-Vietnam War movement. In the arena of war protest, many young men found an outlet for these anxieties. In belittling the work of women activists or in assigning them grunge work, men acted to prove their masculinity, despite their untraditional (in a gendered sense) stance on the war. Their treatment of women in the movement reflected back to them their (troubled) sense of masculinity.

Jeffreys-Jones is one of the few historians to note of the connection between the masculinity-based anxieties and sexism within the antiwar movement:

> [Y]oung men who refused to serve their country were accused of cowardice and so, against their better judgment, may have suffered from a loss of self-esteem. Ordering women about and flaunting the availability of sex in those envied sixties orgies was a way of restoring a sense of virility. (1999, p. 153)

Aside from undercutting the sexism borne by women antiwar activists, Jeffreys-Jones also fails to provide a deeper understanding of this phenomenon. Still, his passing observation does reveal another important way in which men in the anti-Vietnam War movement sought to channel apprehension around masculinity. In addition to asserting authority in decision-making and belittling women's contributions, male activists established their masculinity through sexual exploits with women. Indeed, sexism in the movement found additional expression through heterosexual relations among antiwar protestors (Firestone, 1968b; MacPherson, 1984). Women understood, perhaps even better than men, that sex was being used by men as a way to cement their masculinity and power, and many recognised that for these movement men to feel good (about their masculinity), women had to feel worse. In a 'rap session' with other women activists, one woman highlighted the importance of heterosexual virility to their male counterparts: 'A man's sense of personal worth comes through his cockmanship in the Playboy mystique. It is the old business of raising your self-image by lowering someone else' (Firestone, 1968b). She and the other women spoke about the 'exploitation' of heterosexual relations within the movement (Firestone, 1968b). Indeed, such 'cockmanship' worked to repair a sense of manhood that had

been damaged by both hawks and cultural assumptions around masculinity and war experience, and it did so at the expense of women antiwar activists.

While many men found in the anti-Vietnam War arena methods for re-asserting a masculinity based on normative notions of male dominance and heterosexual relations, others used the movement to recreate masculinity. Mark Gerzon, an activist against the war in Vietnam who later wrote about U.S. masculinity as understood by 'white, college-educated, heterosexual men' (1982, p. 1) like him, has offered an illuminating perspective on the kind of bellicose masculinity from which many antiwar men tried to distance themselves. Gerzon emphasises both the role of the military in the construction of traditional U.S. masculinity and young men's awareness of this dynamic: 'The power to make men soldiers is the government's single most powerful tool for shaping young men's masculinity' (p. 99). As has already been stated, whether they explicitly took stock in the notion or not, many young men had difficulty letting go of the idea that military service, particularly war experience, would establish their manhood. Nonetheless, male antiwar activists like Gerzon rallied against the 'images of manhood that had become anachronistic and self-destructive' (94), the images that Gerzon says propelled the very men leading the war in Vietnam and other military operations – President Johnson and other government officials.

In October 1967, Mobe organised one of the antiwar movement's most famous actions – a 'March on the Pentagon' in which tens of thousands participated. While scholars have established the importance of this demonstration's sometimes radical tactics (Hall, 2007) and the intense clashes that took place between protestors and the National Guard (Foley, 2003), this action also conveys a great deal about the ways in which young men like Gerzon worked to reconceptualise masculinity through antiwar efforts. The March and the accounts that have been written of it, such as Gerzon's (1982) and Norman Mailer's Pulitzer Prize-winning *Armies of the Night* (1968), reveal ways that many men who stood against the war reconceived the connections between war and masculinity. This process and this particular protest are in fact reminiscent of the gendering processes that took place around the Burial of Traditional Womanhood, and they similarly reveal the kinds of competing (and overlapping) masculinities that shaped the antiwar arena.

Building off of author Leslie Fielder's observations, Gerzon wrote that 'the men in the cultural and political protest movements seemed to be trying […] to "establish a new relationship...with their own masculinity"', and militarism was at the heart of this (1982, p. 95). Speaking of the October 1967 demonstration against the war at the Pentagon, Gerzon reflected:

> We were demonstrating at the Pentagon to disassociate ourselves from a certain kind of manhood. We were opposed, not merely to a foreign policy, but to a masculine identity that breeds such policies. We were confronting the five-sided symbol of the soldiering sex. (1982, p. 85)

Clearly, Gerzon and others sought to challenge the kinds of normative masculine ideals that they believed were responsible for hawkish policies. The Pentagon – that 'five-sided symbol of the soldiering sex' and the home of the Department of Defense – became an emblem for this kind of masculinity, and the March served as a demonstration against militarised masculinity as much as an antiwar effort. Of course, these efforts to revise notions of masculinity coincided with dramatic changes to warfare itself, changes that carried implications for the links between militarism and masculinity. Writing several years before Raphael, Gerzon noted that, for young antiwar men and women alike, the link between militarism and masculinity was weakened with the implementation of nuclear weapons but broken completely with the Vietnam War (1982, p. 97).

Though Gerzon does not provide a clear picture of the kind of masculinity that he and other antiwar men sought to create, he and his comrades did recognise that a highly militarised masculinity was in fact 'a certain kind of manhood' and that a different masculinity was possible. Still, Gerzon recounts that even while they protested it, a kind of militarism infused dove masculinity: 'Many of us were antiwar soldiers, as imbued with machismo as the war machine itself' (1982, p. 86). They used the rhetoric of fighting and war, donned helmets and taunted the National Guardsmen at the demonstration. Such aggressive posturing was more reminiscent of the militarised masculinity that young men like himself resented, Gerzon wrote, than challenging to it. Less than the culture of the military and war, young doves targeted what felt like compulsory links between manhood and the military.

The narrowness of these attempts to demilitarise masculinity eclipsed not only the aggressive culture of the military but also the extent to which masculinity-conscious male doves continued to depend on other oppressive elements of normative masculinity. Particularly evident at the Pentagon protest was the tendency for these antiwar men to secure their sense of manhood to the protection of women. As much as the notion of protecting women had infused masculine war rhetoric, the young men in the anti-Vietnam War movement who were interested in demilitarising masculinity often did not see the connections between this hawkish discourse and their own preoccupation with women's 'protection'.

Novelist Norman Mailer participated in the Pentagon protest and his account in *Armies* (1968), as well as Gerzon's, reveals how women represented a contested site of, in Gerzon's words, 'psychological advantage' (1982, p. 86) for both pro- and antiwar men. As many journalists reported and Mailer reiterated, a disproportionate number of women protestors endured arrests and violence at the hands of the thousands of troops who were called in to serve as security during the demonstration. Mailer gave an account of one particularly brutal beating of a woman demonstrator. As she was being dragged away by troops, witnesses caught sight of her face: '"But there was no face there; All we saw were some raw skin and blood [...] She vomited, and that too was blood. Then they rushed her away."' (1968, pp. 284, 288) Both Mailer and Gerzon understood the strategy of targeting and beating women protestors as an unambiguous attempt to 'humiliate the demonstrators', (Mailer 1968, p. 289), particularly male protestors. Gerzon spoke more forthrightly: 'The beating of women proved to be a brilliant tactic....it efficiently undermined the men. We watched helplessly as "our" women were driven off in vans' (p. 86). These antiwar women activists had represented a 'psychological advantage' for male antiwar demonstrators, Gerzon wrote (1982, p. 86), one that underpinned the contested masculinity of the latter. Moreover, Gerzon understood women protestors' presence on the antiwar side to represent a demoralising, emasculating blow for the (presumed pro-war) troops they confronted. In assaulting women demonstrators, Mailer saw the troops 'had plucked all [their] stolen balls back' (1968, p. 289), and Gerzon concurred (1982, p. 86).

The story unfolded by Mailer and Gerzon reveals how antiwar women's bodies became contested sites for competing masculinities during both the 1967 Pentagon protest and in the larger anti-Vietnam War movement. Women's presence had bolstered male activists, Gerzon wrote. Those who were against a militarised masculinity could count on female protestors to ameliorate a sense of masculinity already challenged by dominant ideas around the necessity of war experience in manhood or effeminate male doves. Yet their inability to 'protect' their female counterparts counted as a double blow – not only was the antiwar women's presence *as a symbol of demilitarised masculinity* under attack, but these antiwar men were simply incapable of performing the normative masculine role of woman's protector. The Pentagon protest also points

to the struggle young male antiwar activists had in re-conceiving a new masculinity through antiwar efforts. 'Imbued' as they were with machismo, male protestors understood their masculinity to be tied to their female counterparts ('"our" women') and their ability to protect them – much like soldiers at war must protect womenfolk back home. Male activists' attempts to re-conceive of masculinity were, at best, incomplete and at worst, circular.

Conclusion

We know that war is experienced as a gendered activity, and we know that antiwar activity is often divided along gendered lines. But, as the U.S.'s anti-Vietnam War movement shows, gender becomes reconstituted as much *through* antiwar experiences as it acts as a predictor *for* those experiences. The anti-Vietnam War movement proved to be a gendering experience for both male and female participants. Through movement activity, men and women participants re-worked social and political meanings of gender, as well as gender-based anxieties. The sexist practices and attitudes that men exhibited – assigning menial tasks to women, belittling their contribution to antiwar efforts, and sexually exploiting women – became the channels through which men tried to assuage gendered anxieties that were bound up with their antiwar stance. In turn, many women countered male bigotry in ways that redefined their place within the movement, whether through undercutting the logic of male dominance, re-appropriating women's credibility, or breaking off from the movement. Similarly, many men used their antiwar activity to advocate a new, de-militarised masculinity even if this new masculinity did not appear all that different from the original, militarised masculinity. In all of these ways, traditional gender norms were, at turns, cemented, negotiated, and challenged, and in turn, these dynamics transformed the landscape of antiwar activism in the U.S.

As a critical thinker on war and gender, Goldstein has highlighted the work of Mark Gerzon in 'propos[ing] themes and scripts that may serve as alternatives to war in shaping masculine identity', but his praise is tempered by the recognition that as yet 'these themes seem underdeveloped' (2001, p. 286). No doubt, such underdevelopment is not helped by the scholarly inclination to read antiwar activities as gendered as opposed to gendering experiences. Scholarship should begin to ask how activities related to war, including antiwar activism, have served as arenas where gender does not just inscribe the activity, but is variously contested, upheld, and questioned. If we attempt to understand the gendering dynamics of war protest then we can come to appreciate the ways in which gender-related anxieties and problems were worked out via antiwar activism. We can recognise, too, the ways in which antiwar activists, like NYRW feminists and Gerzon, strove to re-define gender *through* wartime experiences.

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